

(b) 156 posts reserved for Scheduled Casts/Scheduled Tribes to be filled by direct recruitment were vacant.

As provided in the Presidential directive, all necessary steps are taken to fill up the vacancies reserved for SCs and STs.

[Translation]

Koyal Karo Hydro Power Project

5326. SHRI RAM LAKHAN SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have approved the setting up of Koyal Karo Hydro Power Project; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND NON CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

12.00 hrs.

[Translation]

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA (South Delhi) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the issue of export-import of wheat was discussed in the House a few days ago, I do not want to raise this matter again but for the news item appearing in a newspaper dated the 21st March.

[English]

The heading given here is : 'Tenders floated for wheat import. It reads as follows

"India today floated global tenders

for the purchase of one million tonnes of wheat following refusal of the USA to sell the item on subsidised rate."

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this gives rise to two very important issues. Firstly, why did USA refuse export of wheat to India? Our Food Secretary Shri P. Tripathi was in USA for twelve days and an expenditure of rupees four lakhs was incurred on his visit. But his visit did not bear any fruit due to the Cuba issue. I do not want to go into that. Still more important thing which I would like to point out is that new crop will start arriving in the market in the month of April and the Government is hoping for a bumper crop of wheat this season. Under such conditions, the import of wheat would be a sheer wastage of the precious foreign - exchange. Government announced whereas Rs. 250/- per quintal as the procurement price for wheat whereas in the international market, India would have to pay 168 American dollars per quintal which comes to Rs. 425/- in Indian currency. Had Government paid more procurement price to the farmers, it would have helped in augmenting wheat production in the country itself.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a very vital issue and I have given a notice on this. The crucial question at this juncture is whether there is any genuine need for the import of wheat for the country? I have raised these two questions and I would like to have your ruling on it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister, in response to a question dated the 25th February raised by Shri Chandrajeet Yadav and Shri Nitish Kumar, stated that the country had 14.5 million tonnes of stocks enough for PDS for the month of Feb. and March and on the same day, in reply to my question, the hon. Minister stated that stocks available